



Hands-Free Myth Buster

MYTH: My car came with an infotainment system. Since it's built into my car, it must be safe.

FACT: Advancements in automotive technology can be broadly separated into two categories:

- Technologies related to vehicle performance and driving, such as vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V) communication, crash avoidance systems, adaptive headlights and stability control systems.
- Technologies unrelated to vehicle performance or the task of driving, such as hands-free phoning, speech-to-text and the ability to use social media while driving.

There are many safety benefits to technologies related to vehicle performance and driving. Technology also can be a solution to the distracted driving problem with features such as call blocking. But not all technology is created equal. Anything that distracts a driver from performing an essential driving task can be dangerous and doesn't belong in a dashboard infotainment system.

MYTH: I have an infotainment system in my dashboard, so it's safe for me to speak my texts and drive.

FACT: Despite auto makers equipping vehicles with dashboard infotainment systems at an increasing rate, these systems can bring some driver distractions. In fact, voice texting features have been found by research to be even more distracting than typing. Why? Even if drivers don't need to use their hands to type texts and emails, voice-to-text features require drivers to look at the translated messages to be sure they are correct.

Drivers also are mentally distracted because they're focused on talking and fixing the message errors. Slower reaction times occur, no matter whether drivers are typing a text or using voice-to-text technology.

MYTH: Most car crashes are caused by car malfunctions such as faulty brakes, blown tires or engine problems.

FACT: Vehicle problems represent a very small portion of crashes. Most vehicle problems have to do with improperly inflated or maintained tires. As much as 90 percent of all crashes are caused by driver error and can be prevented.

Cell phone use behind the wheel can lead to driver error, and it's a very prevalent behavior on our roads today – 9 percent of drivers at any given daylight moment are talking on phones while driving. Drivers using cell phones are four times as likely to be in a crash, in part because their ability to respond to hazards is significantly affected. Drivers talking on cell phones can miss seeing up to 50 percent of the roadway environment, including traffic signs, pedestrians and cyclists. All of these risk factors could be lessened if drivers would hang up their phones and simply drive.

HANDS-FREE IS NOT RISK-FREE

Pledge to drive cell free at
nsc.org/handsfree.